

The Agriculture, Fish and Water Process (AFW)

Groups seek clean water and fish recovery on farmland

Background

A coalition of farmers, environmental groups, government agencies, legislators, and tribes have joined in a collaborative effort to address fish recovery and pollution control on farmland. The project, called "Agriculture, Fish and Water" (AFW), is one of the cornerstones of the Governor's Salmon Recovery Plan.

The AFW effort consists of two concurrent processes: the **Field Office Technical Guide** (FOTG) process and the **Irrigation Districts' Guideline Development** process. Each process consists of an Executive Committee represented by individual caucuses.

Both groups have been meeting on a regular basis, with an emphasis on education and site tours, as well as beginning to work on negotiations.

Field Office Technical Guide

The FOTG process involves negotiating changes to existing farm conservation practice standards. The basis of these standards is the Technical Guide developed by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. Issues covered by this process include water quality and fish habitat issues such as

bank stability, "properly functioning conditions" that fish need for survival, and management of riparian zones. These new or revised FOTGs would then be used to develop farm plans that provide regulatory certainty when implemented. The negotiated agreement must assure the long-term economic viability of agriculture in Washington State.

Irrigation districts process

The second component to AFW includes the irrigation districts working with participating AFW members to develop guidelines that will address water use and conservation and water quality requirements. These new guidelines would be used by irrigation districts to prepare Comprehensive Irrigation District Management Plans to help enhance, restore, and protect habitat for endangered fish and wildlife species, and address state water quality needs.

Areas not included in this process would include individual surface water appropriators, groundwater users that have hydraulic continuity, and Columbia/Snake River irrigators.

Science as the guide

The state has invited Washington State University to participate in scientific aspects of this process. The AFW process will also have a large educational component, including site visits to provide opportunities for everyone involved seeing firsthand what's happening "on the ground."

Coordination, cooperation

According to Jim Jesernig, Director of the Department of Agriculture, the goal is to provide agricultural with a streamlined 'one stop shop' opportunity to address and comply with ESA and CWA requirements.

"It will take the cooperative partnerships of local, state, and federal agencies, Tribes, agricultural groups and organizations, and environmental organizations to achieve this goal," said Curt Smitch, the Governor's Natural Resource Advisor.

"Local, state, and federal government programs will provide financial and technical support to these efforts, but the bulk of the work to conserve, protect and restore watersheds will be done on private land," stated Steve Meyer, Executive

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Director of the Washington
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AFW members

Representatives from:

- agricultural community
- irrigation districts
- environmental groups
- WA Department of
Agriculture
- WA Department of Fish and
Wildlife
- WA Department of Ecology
- WA Conservation
Commission
- The Governor's Office
- federal agencies
- local governments
- state legislators
- Tribal governments

For More Information

For more information on the
Agriculture, Fish and Water
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